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Community *notes*

Is Solar Energy Right For You?

The installation of solar panels can be a great way to get renewable energy at home. But, before you commit, make sure it's a great choice for you! Here are some tips to consider before investing in this energy switch.

Review your utility bill to see how much electricity you used in the last year and what it cost so that you can accurately assess the amount of savings that solar panels will provide.

Consider how long you plan to stay in your home. A residential system is designed to stay on a home for at least 20 years. Will you be able to take full advantages of the system? How will the system affect your ability to sell your home?



Look carefully at your home. The amount of direct sunlight your roof gets, the condition of your roof and other environmental factors will determine how much energy a solar energy system will generate.

Both purchase and rental contracts for solar energy systems are complicated and have long term consequences. Make sure you fully understand the installation process and the contract terms before you sign.

For more information, read the County's new factsheet: ["Lighting the Way – Evaluating Solar Energy for Your Home."](#) To obtain these tips in another format, contact the Office of Consumer Protection at consumer@howardcountymd.gov or at 410-313-6420.

Greetings

There are just a few seats left for Judy Collins' performance on April 1. Don't miss out on the opportunity to enjoy this legendary performer. Her show is hosted by Columbia Festival of the Arts and tickets are available through the [website](#).

If you are attending the concert, I'll see you there!

MayKay

Daylight Savings Time

Daylight Savings is this Sunday, March 12. As you turn your clocks forward an hour, take a few minutes to replace the smoke alarm batteries if needed and push the test button to make sure the alarms are working. It's also a great idea to check carbon monoxide detectors and HVAC filters. These quick and easy steps will make sure your household is prepared in case of an emergency.

Earth Forum

Howard County Earth Forum is hosting a free educational event on Sunday, March 19 from 2:00 until 4:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church (9325 Presbyterian Circle, Columbia). Several gardeners, cultivators, and tenders of the earth have been invited to share their insights and advice with the community. Participants will gain information and enthusiasm for activities like bee-keeping, developing a backyard habitat, attracting monarch butterflies, growing vegetables, creating rain gardens, and much more.

For more information, visit their [website](#) or call 410-730-3545.

Pollinator-Friendly Gardening

With spring around the corner, it is the time to start thinking about helping the shrinking bee population. Bees are one of the top pollinators in our world; over 150 food crops in the United States depend on these pollinators to transport and distribute pollen in order for the successful production of various fruits, vegetables, and seeds. Here are some suggestions on how to do your part to support our honey bees:

First, it may be time to rethink your outdoor space. Designating a portion of your property to plant bee-friendly flowers would provide food and a habitat for honey bees, bumble bees, butterflies and other pollinators. Never use pesticides or



insecticides in your "Bee-Garden". Plan for blooms season-round to ensure the maximum amount of blossom time; this will not only be good for the bees, but it'll also keep your garden looking beautiful round-season. If needed, remember to

check with your HOA or covenant advisor before you make changes.

If you do not have the space for planting a large garden, fear not! Window gardening boxes are inexpensive, aesthetically pleasing, and easy to maintain.

Native plants are best equipped to live in local climate, soil, and interact best with local animals. In order for our native bee species to thrive, they need access to the wildflowers on which they are dependent. For more information on native Maryland plants, [Maryland Native Plant Society](#) has created a comprehensive list of native species.

Support the [Honey Bee Conservancy's Sponsor-a-Hive program](#) which places solitary bee homes and honey bee hives in school and community gardens across the U.S. This program not only helps bees but it also educates students on biology, the environment, agriculture, food sources and nutrition. This is an easy way to do your part if gardening is not your forte.

If you're serious about helping the bees, take the time to learn more about conservation efforts, bee keeping, and how to make the most efficient bee garden to maximize your efforts. The [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#) has created a helpful guide for attracting pollinators to your garden. Bees need our help; it is time for action.

Columbia Cleanup Day

Keep our community beautiful by participating in the 8th annual Columbia Cleanup Day on Saturday, March 25. Volunteers will simultaneously pick up litter in open space locations in all 10 villages. Nine of Columbia's villages are scheduled to work from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., while the Kings Contrivance event will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. To find more information on meeting locations and cleanup areas, please visit the [Columbia Association's website](#).

Soup'r Sundae

The Faith Community Partnership of Bethany United Methodist Church and Glen Mar United Methodist Church and Wilde Lake High School are hosting the ninth annual Soup'r Sundae, a family event featuring soups prepared by area restaurants, as a fundraiser for Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center on Sunday, April 2, from 12:00-3:00 p.m., at Wilde Lake High School, 5460 Trumpeter Road, Columbia, MD 21044.



Admission is \$20 per adult and \$5 per child under 12 and includes unlimited soup and bread and ice cream. There will be a silent auction with hundreds of items, music and entertainment for children. Over 600 people attended last year's event. Tickets are at www.soupsundae.eventbrite.com or by contacting cathyvsmith@verizon.net. Tickets will also be available at the door for cash and checks made out to Grassroots. Sponsorships are available.

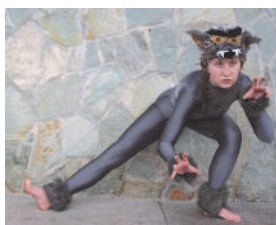
Breathe Deep Columbia

Breathe Deep Columbia is a grassroots event started by Michael Osborne, a Columbia resident and seven year lung cancer survivor, who was diagnosed in April 2008. Michael is one of the fortunate few who have made it past the five-year survival mark. Although lung cancer is the number-one cancer Killer, the disease kills more people than colorectal, breast, and pancreatic cancers combined, it receives about 6% of federal research funding. The donated funds from Breathe Deep Columbia will support the most promising research into early detection and more effective treatments.

On Saturday, April 22, participants will meet at the Lakefront Plaza at 10:00 a.m. for the 5k. Registration for the event costs \$10-\$25; all participants will receive an official event t-shirt. To register or make a donation, please visit [LUNGeivity's website](#). Proceeds from the event will benefit LUNGeivity and will fund research to achieve its goal to increase survivorship of lung cancer. Help them reach their goal.

Peter And The Wolf

On Saturday, March 18 at 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., Narrator Greg Jukes and the dancers from Dance Connections join the Columbia Orchestra for Prokofiev's immortal Peter and the Wolf along with music from Harry Potter and Stravinsky's Firebird at the James Rouse Theatre. Children of all ages will



enjoy this fun-filled introduction to the orchestra. Choose either concert and try your hand at playing instruments between the two performances at the free Musical Instrument Petting Zoo.

Tickets cost \$15 for ages 12 and up, 11 or younger may attend for free. You may purchase your tickets through [The Columbia Orchestra](#).

Musical Volunteers Needed

Love music and performing? Volunteer for Winter Growth where you'll find an enthusiastic audience eager to listen to the music you have to share. This is a fantastic opportunity for those musically inclined to brighten someone's day with song.

Winter Growth, Inc. is a nonprofit dedicated to providing community-based services that support seniors and disabled adults in achieving their highest potential for independence, dignity, and life satisfaction. If you have an interest in volunteering, you may contact Vivian Golden through the [Howard County Volunteer Center's website](#).

Upcoming Parenting Classes

Preparing to Launch:

When your children turn 18, they become legal adults and can enter into many types of contracts without the permission of parents or guardians. Scams and identity thieves take advantage of young adults' inexperience with how to handle these contracts. Parents and teens are invited to join an investigator from The Howard County Office of Consumer Protection to learn about how to avoid becoming the victim of scams and identity theft, how and when to use credit and debit cards, consumer-based decision making skills, and more.

The Family Institute is hosting Preparing To Launch program on Thursday, March 23 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Bain Center. It is a free event; for more information and to register [visit the County's website](#).

How to be a GREAT Grandparent:

Are you about to become, or are you a new grandparent? A lot has changed in parenting since grandparents were parents! Learn the latest research-based information to balance your tried and true skills with current best practices. Discuss your role as a grandparent versus being the parent. Discover ways



to safeguard your home for infants and toddlers and gather important resources to help support your children in their new role as parents on Thursday, March 23 from 6:00 until 8:00 p.m. at the Bain Center.

Space is limited, so pre-registration is required. For more information and to register, registration options are [online](#) or by phone: 410-313-1940.

HopeWorks Is Relocating

[HopeWorks](#), Howard County's Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Center, is relocating later this month. The Association of Community Services has been working with the Howard County Housing Commission in developing a nonprofit center located in central Columbia that will accommodate as many as 12 nonprofits. The goal is to improve access and coordination of services. HopeWorks will be closed from Friday, March 24 through Monday, March 27 for the move. Offices will reopen for business at the new location on Tuesday, March 28.

Upcoming Events

Silas Craft Collegians Program Fundraiser

Monday, March 13 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Hunan Manor Restaurant

Enjoy delicious food and support this collegiate program that offers students mentorship toward their education goals. For more information, visit [HCC's website](#).

Young Driver Collision Avoidance Training

Saturday, March 18 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

James N. Robey Public Safety Training Center

2200 Scott Wheeler Dr., Marriottsville

The Police Department will instruct a defensive driving program for 16 – 20 year olds with a valid Maryland Class C license and a vehicle. For more information, call 410-313-3758 or email Jessica Beram at jberam@howardcountymd.gov.

Container Vegetable Gardening

Saturday, March 18 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Historic Oakland

The Town Center Community Association is hosting a free container vegetable gardening information that will focus on how to raise vegetables in small spaces, giving insight on container types, watering techniques, fertilization, etc.

Columbia's 50th Celebration Begins!

Sunday, March 19 11:00 a.m.

The Mall of Columbia

Come out to celebrate at the opening ceremony at the outdoor courtyard between Maggiano's and Season 52 and then after walk through the mall for entertainment and activities for all ages.



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